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ABSTRACT

Procedures and findings of a recent introductory psychology textbook selection effort at 4-year liberal arts undergraduate institution are presented. The following sequential steps were taken: (1) identification of introductory texts for consideration; (2) design of an evaluation form for reviewing targeted books; and (3) collection and analysis procedures for data generated for each book. Seven faculty members and three psychology majors evaluated 34 books on 12 selected factors. Data analysis was predicated largely on stepwise regression. The five top-rated books were rated again to yield a preference that became the department's introductory text. The findings of the correlational matrix and stepwise multiple linear regression identified six specific evaluative criteria to be emphasized in future book selection: content breadth within chapters; anticipated student reactions; readability; content depth throughout; organization; and design and learning appeal. Four tables and an appendix give the ratings of the books considered. The evaluation form and a 25-item list of references are included. (SLD)

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Textbook Selection Procedures:

A Comprehensive Approach

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Running head: TEXTBOOK SELECTION PROCEDURES

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Abstract

Textbook selection procedures, applied recently to an introduction to psychology course but generic to any course, are proposed against the backdrop of currently relevant literature on the topic. Recommended textbook identification sources, review criteria, data analysis options predicated largely on stepwise regression, data presentation formats, adoption criteria, and illustrative results are discussed.

Textbook Selection Procedures:

A Comprehensive Approach

Periodic directories of introductory psychology texts in print (e.g., Lowman, 1979, 1980; Rogers & Bowie, 1984; Taney, 1986) certainly attest to the extensive market of such works that confronts any faculty/student committee faced with the arduous task of reviewing and selecting a new adoption.

The literature available on this topic can best be characterized as representing a broad range of strategies that extends from rather generic/multi-stage considerations in any textbook review process (e.g., Chatman & Goetz, 1985; Jacobs, 1983) to the use of fairly specific criteria that seem to be quite functional and relevant to the introductory-level course (e.g., Gillen, 1975; Glenn & Lewis, 1982; Griesinger & Klene, 1984; Harari & Jacobson, 1985; Morris, 1977; Putnam, 1985; Quereshi, 1981a, 1981b; Quereshi & Buchkoski, 1979; Weiten, 1988). Additionally, a somewhat novel perspective on the introductory psychology textbook market of quite recent vintage (Griggs & Jacobson, 1989) has focused on the perceptions of authors and editors rather than the typical appeal to introductory psychology instructors and students.

This paper reports the procedures and findings of a recent introductory psychology textbook selection effort

undertaken at a predominantly four-year, liberal arts-oriented undergraduate institution. As suggested by the exploratory nature of any textbook selection task, the purpose of this study was to address the following research questions: (a) Which of 34 introductory psychology books targeted by an initial screening effort would merit the highest overall rating? (b) Which of 11 evaluative criteria designated as component or predictor variables would most extensively contribute to the single factor that served as the composite or criterion variable, viz., "overall rating of text"? (c) Which pairs of evaluative factors from among the 12 variables would register the highest correlations?

Method

The methodology used in this study spanned the following sequential steps: (a) identification of introductory texts for consideration; (b) design of evaluation form for critiquing targeted books; and (c) collection and analysis procedures for data generated on each book.

Identification of Targeted Textbooks

This textbook selection project was implemented during the spring 1988 semester. Accordingly, the decision was made to consider only those general psychology textbooks that carried a 1987 or 1988 copyright. In order to ensure the most comprehensive identification of those books meeting

this initial copyright-related criterion, Books in Print (Bowker Co., 1987-1988) and Forthcoming Books (Bowker Co., 1988) served as the major preliminary sources of available textbooks. Regarding this second source, Forthcoming Books (January 1988 issue) augmented Books in Print in a particularly valuable way in that it not only provided a cumulative list of books published since summer 1987 but also cited books scheduled for publication between January and May 1988. In addition to these printed reference materials, possible textbooks for consideration were also identified via correspondence with major book publishers. These procedures resulted in a total of 34 textbooks being included in the review process. (See Appendix A for a listing of these 34 books.)

Design of Textbook Evaluation Form

Occurring concurrently with the selection of targeted books to be considered was the design of an evaluation form intended for use by the department's seven faculty members as well as three designated psychology majors. The resulting textbook evaluation form encompassed a total of 12 factors/variables/dimensions on which each of the 34 targeted books was critiqued using a "grading scale" of "A" (labelled as a 4) through "F" (coded as a 0). Those 12 factors include the following items: (I)tem 01--content breadth across chapters; I02--content breadth within chapters;

I03--balance of total content; I04--content depth throughout text; I05--organization; I06--research basis; I07--readability; I08--design/learning appeal; I09--ancillary materials; I10--test item bank; I11--anticipated student reactions; and I12--overall rating of text. Additionally, three open-ended items were included that dealt with "strong and weak features" of a given book as well as "other observations" that perhaps an evaluator thought was not adequately covered elsewhere in the form. These objective-type and open-ended items were suggested primarily by the professional literature on textbook selection (e.g., Putnam, 1985; Weiten, 1988) as well as faculty input. (Appendix B displays the 12-item evaluation form that was used.)

Data Collection and Analysis Procedures

For the duration of the spring 1988 semester, the 34 targeted books and supplementary materials were housed in a commons area of the department easily accessed by the seven faculty and three student evaluators. Participants were encouraged to work their way through the collection of books independently and to strive for an evaluation of materials that balanced a "norm-referenced" critique of any given book vis-a-vis its competitors against a more "criterion-referenced" evaluation rooted in essential standards desired in any adopted textbook regardless of the features of its competitors.

As the semester progressed, responses to the 12 objective-type items on the completed evaluation forms were entered progressively into a data file consistent with an A-to-F (or 4-to-0) scale. Narrative responses to the three open-ended items were noted and included in the on-going data file.

At the conclusion of the approximately four-month period of time during which the targeted materials were evaluated, the data file was analyzed via the descriptive statistics, correlational matrices, and stepwise multiple regression features of SPSS^{x}. As a result of these analyses, the top five rated books were identified and then subjected to a final screening by the evaluators. Each evaluator awarded five points to his/her first-place choice, four points to a second-place choice, etc. The textbook from among these five finalists that totalled the largest number of points on this final screening became the department's introduction to psychology text adoption beginning fall 1988. This final screening, it might be noted, also included for the first time extensive group discussions of the pros and cons of each text.

Results

Table 1 displays the Pearson *r*s among the 12 evaluative items. Of the possible 66 *r*s, 9 were significant at the .05 level (two-tailed) and another 4 were significant at the .01

Insert Table 1 about here

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level (two-tailed). The three highest correlation coefficients involved the following pairs of factors: I11 (anticipated student reactions) and I07 (readability) (r = .94, p < .01); I11 (anticipated student reactions) and I08 (design/learning appeal) (r = .93, p < .01); and I08 (design/learning appeal) and I07 (readability) (r = .93, p < .01). From among the 13 statistically significant correlations, I11 (anticipated student reactions) appeared as a factor the greatest number of times (in 5 pairs of variables), followed by I05 (organization) that surfaced in 4 statistically significant pairs of variables.

Stepwise multiple linear regression procedures were used to determine which of the 11 factors represented by evaluative items I01 (content breadth across chapters) through I11 (anticipated student reactions) contributed most extensively to the 12th evaluative item (I12--overall rating of text). A multiple R of .91 defined a significant regression equation (R^2 = .82, F = 48.93, df = 4/43, p < .0001) that included the following four predictor variables: I02--content breadth within chapters; I11--anticipated student reactions; I07--readability; and I04--content depth throughout text. The four steps in this regression equation, then, accounted for 82% of the variance in I12 (overall rating of text). Table 2 specifies for each of the four predictor variables its B value, beta weight, test statistic, and level of significance.

Insert Table 2 about here

As indicated, "content breadth within chapters" (I02) was the strongest predictor of "overall rating of text" (I12) with a beta weight of .66 ($p < .0001$). "Anticipated student reactions" (I11) was the second strongest predictor of "overall rating of text" with a beta weight of .36 ($p < .01$). "Readability" (I07) and "content depth throughout text" (I04) were the third and fourth strongest predictors of the criterion variable with beta weights of .32 ($p < .01$) and -.23 ($p < .05$), respectively.

Table 3 presents the means (on a scale from 0 to 4) of the five highest scoring books per evaluative items I01

Insert Table 3 about here

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through I12. Item I12 (overall rating of text) is listed in column one and shows Dworetzky's (1988) text as having the highest overall mean rating ($M = 3.67$). The second through fifth columns correspond to items I02, I11, I07, and I04--those four factors that the stepwise regression analysis identified as accounting for 82% of the variance in the evaluators' overall rating of the texts. Accordingly, Darley, Gluksberg, and Kinchla (1988) and Krebs and Blackman (1988) tied for first ($M = 3.80$) on item I02--content breadth within chapters; Dworetzky (1988) scored the highest ($M = 3.58$) on item I11--anticipated student reactions; Dworetzky's (1988) book again had the highest mean rating ($M = 3.75$) on item I07--

readability; and Simons, Irwin, and Drinnin (1987) had the highest rating ($\underline{M}$ = 3.63) on item I04--content depth throughout text. The balance of Table 3 shows the five highest mean ratings on each of the remaining seven factors, with factors I09 and I10 segregated at the end of the listing because of their status as those items most frequently omitted by evaluators due to paucity of information/materials available for critiquing.

Returning again to Table 3, the five highest scoring books for item I12 (overall rating of text) were as follows: Dworetzky (1988), $\underline{M}$ = 3.67; Darley et al. (1988) and Santrock (1988), $\underline{M}$ = 3.60; Kagan and Segal (1988) and Krebs and Blackman (1988), $\underline{M}$ = 3.40. These top five finalists were then subjected to a final screening by the evaluators, with a first-place selection being awarded five points, a second-place choice four points, etc. The highest rated book from among these five finalists during the final screening was, again, Dworetzky (1988) with a point total of 28. Table 4 shows the final screening points amassed by each of the five finalists on this very last round of evaluations.

Insert Tabel 4 about here

Discussion

The correlational matrix generated in this study highlights pairs of variables that emphasize the following specific evaluative criteria: I11--anticipated student reactions; I05--organization; I07--readability; and I08--design/learning appeal. The stepwise multiple linear regression output features the following four evaluative factors that most extensively defines the overall rating of a text: I02--content breadth within chapters; I11--anticipated student reactions; I07--readability; and I04--content depth throughout text. These findings, then, would seem to suggest the functional value of six specific evaluative criteria being emphasized in future textbook selection efforts; namely, content breadth within chapters, anticipated student reactions, readability, content depth throughout text, organization, and design/learning appeal.

From a procedural standpoint--and perhaps with the recognition that hindsight is more often than not 20/20--a greater acknowledgment and appreciation is given to the observation by Chatman and Goetz (1985) that textbook selection procedures should incorporate successive multiple stages that move from an initial screening effort aimed at limiting the potentially vast number of texts to be reviewed to a final stage at which a restricted and manageable number of books might be examined in detail within a reasonable period of time.

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Appendix A

Listing of 34 Books Evaluated

B01 Atkinson et al 87
B02 Benjamin et al 87
B03 Bernstein et al 88
B04 Bourne et al 88
B05 Bower et al 87
B06 Carlson 87
B07 Carlson 88
B08 Crooks & Stein 88
B09 Darley et al 88
B10 Doyle 87
B11 Dworetzky 88
B12 Feldman 87
B13 Gleitman 87
B14 Hebb & Donderi 87
B15 Huffman et al 87
B16 Kagan & Segal 88
B17 Krebs & Blackman 88
B18 Landy 87
B19 Lefton & Valentine 88
B20 Lindzey et al 88
B21 Morris 88
B22 Ornstein 88
B23 Papalia & Olds 88
B24 Pettijohn 87
B25 Price et al 87
B26 Roediger et al 87
B27 Santrock 88
B28 Scarr & Vander Zanden 87
B29 Simons et al 87
B30 Spear et al 88
B31 Wade & Tavris 87
B32 Wallace et al 87
B33 Wortman & Loftus 88
B34 Zimbardo 88

A complete listing of the bibliographic citations for these 34 books is available on request.

Psyc100 Textbook Evaluation Form

Author(s): Title:

Publisher: Evaluator:

Directions: For each of the following dimensions of the text being considered, please assign one of the customary letter grades (A, B, C, D, or F). Use NA to designate a dimension which is not applicable. Please provide whatever brief narrative comments are appropriate.

1. Breadth/latitude/comprehensiveness of content coverage across chapters _____
2. Breadth/latitude/comprehensiveness of content coverage within chapters _____
3. Balance of content coverage throughout the text (e.g., between natural science and social science topics) _____
4. Depth of content coverage throughout the text _____
5. Overall organization of the text _____
6. Currency and appropriateness of research basis for topics treated _____
7. Readability of text _____
8. Design/learning appeal of text (e.g., text print style, glossary, index; chapter outlines, introductions, summaries, figures, tables, study questions, etc.) _____
9. Scope and appropriateness of ancillary materials (e.g., study guide, instructor's manual, instructional software, transparencies, slides, videotapes/films, printed test item bank, etc.) _____
10. Appropriateness of test item bank (e.g., nature, format, scope, and technical features of test items; compatibility with HP3000 mainframe demands) _____
11. Overall anticipated reactions of our students to the text _____
12. Overall rating of the text _____

Please respond to the open-ended items on the reverse side.

Strong Features of the Text:

Weak Features of the Text:

Other Observations:

Table 1

Correlations among the Twelve Evaluative Items (I01 - I12)

	I01	I02	I03	I04	I05	I06	I07	I08	I09	I10	I11	I12
I01 (Content breadth across chapters)	-----											
I02 (Content breadth within chapters)	.73	-----										
I03 (Balance of total content)	.39	.33	-----									
I04 (Content depth throughout text)	.53	.84*	.50	-----								
I05 (Organization)	.11	.11	.02	.48	-----							
I06 (Research basis)	.51	.57	-.31	.37	.41	-----						
I07 (Readability)	.06	.42	.15	.73	.81*	.42	-----					
I08 (Design/ learning appeal)	-.02	.39	-.03	.67	.80*	.51	.93**	-----				
I09 (Ancillary materials)	.04	-.01	.23	.47	.82*	-.01	.56	.60	-----			
I10 (Test item bank)	-.31	-.12	.33	.40	.74	-.12	.72	.71	.80*	-----		
I11 (Anticipated student reactions)	.25	.49	.22	.81*	.88**	.49	.94**	.93**	.73	.72	-----	
I12 (Overall rating of text)	.63	.79*	.49	.81*	.49	.64	.68	.61	.23	.31	.75*	-----

N = 7

*$p \leq .05$; **$p \leq .01$; both significance levels are two-tailed.

Table 2

Summary Table for Predictor Variables in Regression Equation

Predictor Variables	B Values	Beta Weights	T	SigT
I02 (Content breadth within chapters)	.6011	.6637	6.79	.0000 ($p<.0001$)
I11 (Anticipated student reactions)	.3832	.3639	3.36	.0017 ($p<.01$)
I07 (Readability)	.2760	.3157	3.08	.0036 ($p<.01$)
I04 (Content depth throughout text)	-.2142	-.2316	-2.17	.0359 ($p<.05$)
(Constant)	-.2192			

Table 3

Matrix of Five Highest Scoring Books Per Items I01 to I12

	I12	I02	I11	I07	I04	I01	I03	I05	I06	I08	I09	I10
B06 Carlson 87					3.50			3.60				
B07 Carlson 88				3.50					3.60	3.50	3.50	
B08 Crooks & Stein 88		3.70			3.60	3.70	3.60				3.50	
B09 Darley et al 88	3.60	3.80	3.30		3.60				3.50	3.30	4.00	4.00
B11 Dworetzky 88	3.67		3.58	3.75		3.92	3.83	3.58	3.58			3.67
B12 Feldman 87						3.88				3.50		
B16 Kagan & Segal 88	3.40		3.30	3.50					3.50	3.30	4.00	4.00
B17 Krebs & Blackman 88	3.40	3.80							3.70			
B20 Lindzey et al 88					3.50	3.80	3.60					
B21 Morris 88											3.67	3.50
B23 Papalia & Olds 88							3.58	3.50				
B24 Pettijohn 87												3.50
B26 Roediger et al 87			3.30					3.50		3.50	3.50	
B27 Santrock 88	3.60	3.60	3.30	3.50			3.80	3.70		3.50	3.50	
B29 Simons et al 87		3.63	3.38		3.63	3.88						
B31 Wade & Tavris 87										3.30		
B33 Wortman & Loftus 88			3.30	3.70							3.50	3.50
B34 Zimbardo 88					3.50		3.58				3.60	

The Ms reported here are on a scale from 4(A) to 0(F).

Table 4

Rank-Ordering of Five Finalists on Final Screening by Evaluators

Ranking	Textbook	Total Points
*1st	Dworetzky (1988)	28
2nd	Darley et al. (1988)	24
3rd	Kagan & Segal (1988)	19
4th	Krebs & Blackman (1988)	18
5th	Santrock (1988)	17

*Introduction to psychology textbook adoption implemented during fall semester 1988.